

reference”). The applicants respectfully submit that the Nguyen reference fails to disclose a “rule to control the personal software agent” as recited in claim 24, and thus the claim is allowable over the prior art. This distinction will be further described in the following section.

Claim 24 Distinguishes Over the Nguyen Reference

Claim 24 as previously amended recites placing a “rule to control the personal software agent” in the subsumption hierarchy. The Nguyen reference is directed to a computer program that verifies the consistency and completeness of a rule-based expert system knowledge base. According to the reference, such a tool “should be very useful to the knowledge engineer in helping him to develop a knowledge base” (4.0 Summary.)

In contrast, a “personal software agent,” such as the one recited in claim 24, is a computer program that:

act[s] on behalf of users to perform routine, tedious and time-consuming tasks. To be useful to an individual user, an agent must be personalized to the individual user’s goals, habits and preferences. Thus, there exists a substantial need for the agent to efficiently and effectively acquire user-specific knowledge from the user.

(Specification, page 1, line 20 to page 2, line 2.) One way this goal is achieved is by the apparatus recited in claim 24, which automatically determines if a new personal software agent rule conflicts with existing rules. Thus, the invention recited in claim 24 does more than let a knowledge engineer fine tune an expert system. Instead, rules that “control [a] personal software agent” are examined to let the personal software agent acquire knowledge directly from the agent’s user.

In view of this distinction, it is respectfully submitted that the Nguyen reference does not anticipate the invention as defined by claim 24.

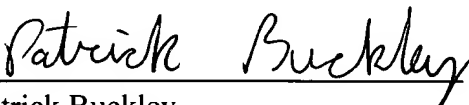
Conclusions

In view of the amendments and remarks set forth above, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the claims pending in the application are allowable. Thus, the Examiner is requested to issue a Notice of Allowance for all pending claims.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at (202) 429-1776 to discuss any matter concerning this application. The Office is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees or credit any overpayments under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or § 1.17 to Deposit Account No. 11-0600.

Respectfully submitted,

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